

Nursing director at Jackson veterans home arrested Thursday, accused of destroying incident reports

Auditor report found numerous violations in August

by maya lau

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A leader of a Jackson nursing home for war veterans was arrested Thursday, accused by investigators of intentionally destroying records about patients falling out of beds.

The arrest comes two weeks after the head of the state Department of Veterans Affairs, David LaCerte, [stepped down amid probes](#) into conditions at Louisiana's veterans nursing homes by the State Inspector General's Office and Legislative Auditor's Office.



Todd Price, 47

Todd Christopher Price, the 47-year-old director of nursing at the Louisiana Veterans Home in Jackson, turned himself in to the East Feliciana Parish Sheriff's Office on Thursday after a warrant for his arrest was issued Oct. 13, according to jail records. He faces 24 counts of first-degree [injuring of public records](#) and a count of [malfeasance in office](#), according to a warrant from the Inspector General's Office.

Price used the facility's computer system to delete 24 records of patients' falls, bruises, head injuries and skin tears from March 12, 2013, to April 1, 2015, according to an affidavit of probable cause by Criminal Investigator Jesse S. Perry, of the Inspector General's Office. Price tossed the reports in the days immediately after each incident, the document says.

A legislative auditor [report in August](#) found numerous violations, including nurses failing to look into allegations a patient was molested and staff neglecting cases of patients drinking and driving. The report also found that a nurse administered

drugs contrary to warnings of severe adverse reactions and numerous patients suffered from unattended infections.

The VA operates five nursing homes — in Bossier City, Monroe, Jackson, Jennings and Reserve — that care for war veterans. Thomas Enright, Gov. Bobby Jindal's executive counsel, took LaCerte's place as interim secretary and will serve until the end of the administration in January. LaCerte didn't comment in October about why he was stepping down.

Price, who is trained as a registered nurse and joined the VA in 2010 before he was promoted to nursing director in 2012, was served a letter stating the department's intent to fire him on Oct. 12, said agency spokeswoman Robin Keller.

Under Louisiana's civil services rules, Price cannot be fired outright because he is entitled to a due-process hearing, Keller said. Price, of Springfield, was placed on paid administrative leave on Sept. 25 and is still being paid his salary of \$91,062, she said. He has not worked in the office since that date, she said.

Price bonded out of jail Thursday. Neither he nor his attorney immediately responded to phone messages.

Greg Phares, chief investigator at the IG's Office, said deleting records of residents' falls interferes with patient care.

"I think that for proper patient care and reporting, and correcting any problems in patient care, an accurate record must be kept of any incident involving a patient. I'm told that protocol requires a full assessment after a fall to make sure that no injuries have occurred," he said.

Phares said the investigation, done in cooperation with the Legislative Auditor's Office, is ongoing. He said he could neither predict nor rule out future arrests in the case.

A call to the auditor's office was not immediately returned Friday.

Keller said she could not reveal why the VA intends to fire Price, but said "all of that information will become public record" once the civil service proceedings are complete. The assistant director of nursing is taking over Price's duties as part of that person's daily work, Keller said.

"Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs will continue to support this ongoing investigation and remains committed to the care and support of Louisiana Veterans," Keller said in a statement.

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